

## EMOTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Everybody (young or old, male or female, rich or poor) in this world usually experiences different types of emotions in a single day. These emotions can be in from anticipation, anger, disgust, surprise and sadness to fear, acceptance and joy. These emotions are innate and they help us to adapt to different types of situation in our environment. Although we all come from different types of culture, we express those different types of emotions in almost identical manner. This paper will define the term 'emotions', give characteristics of emotions and types of emotions. It will discuss the functions of emotions, theories of emotions and the determinants of emotions. It will also highlight the effects of emotions and ways of overcoming negative emotions.*

### Definitions

Defining emotions has been found to be more challenging over many decades of years. However many psychologists have defined emotions in various ways and some of those definition are outlined below;

Emotions are feelings that accompany thinking. They involve physiological arousal, expressive behaviour and conscious experiences (Alberry et al, 2007).

Emotions are conscious experience that affects the body which in turn leads to organic kinesthetic sensations and overt expressions. It also refers to the more intense affective states that are accompanied by widespread changes in the body physiology (Ingule, Ronoh and Ndambuki, 1996)

Emotions can be broadly defined as multi-faceted responses that involve interactions between subjective feeling and objective experiences (Cardwel, 2003)

Emotions generally can be defined as strong feelings that involve a mixture of physiological arousal, conscious experiences and observable behaviour.

Emotions develop from what a person perceives is happening and may respond to people circumstances or events according to the perceived ideas. Emotions are sometimes unpredictable and can make people to behave in such a way that they come to regret later. Emotions can be aroused by situations or some people any time of the day. So it is important for individuals in the society to understand their emotions and learn ways of coping with these emotions. In order to lead a healthy and healthy way of live in each and every day, we should learn on how to cope with emotions and learn socially acceptance ways of expressing our emotions.

### **Characteristics of Emotions**

*Emotions are acute;* this means that pure emotions occurs and takes a short duration. For instance when someone loses a family member, sadness will dominate the life of that person till she is given comfort and then sadness can be relieved. But some like moods tend to take long duration to disappear.

*Emotions are motivators;* this means that emotional experiences are motivators to some actions. For instance, when one is angry, he can fight or destroy property if anger is not controlled.

*Emotions can cause behavioural disorganization;* when one is emotionally unstable, he can act in a random and chaotic state.

*Emotions are product of evolutionary adaptation;* emotions are ways that reflect strategies for survival. For instance, an individual who is fearful will seek some protection from others

*Emotions are non-habitual;* this means that emotions are not habits but they are reactions to some specific experience.

*Emotions can be positively or negatively;* one can be joyful or can be disgusted, angry or sad.

### **Types of Emotions:**

The following are some of the types of emotions as highlighted by Cardwel (2003)

*Affective Emotions;* these are emotions which can be pleasant or unpleasant to an individual. They can be expressed externally like flight when one meet a snake or internally like when one has a though or imaginary image of a rapist that can make one afraid

*Cognitive Emotions;* this is where emotions are labeled as happiness or sadness and reactions are appraised to such expression. For instance, when we watch a terrible accident in TV, we

imagine the pain but may not react to it seriously than when we actually become the victims of accident.

*Physiological Emotions*; these are emotions that arouse our bodies to react and after that reaction, the body will go back to its normal reaction. For instant, when we meet a lion, we can react by screaming and sweating with fast heartbeat but this reaction can end when we are rescued from the lion.

*Behavioural Emotions*; these are goal directed and adaptive emotions. When we experience unpleasant feelings like being disgusted in a place, we tend to move away from there. When we experience pleasant feelings we tend to prolong such emotional state.

### **Some Specific Emotions**

*Anxiety*; this is a feeling of threat and impending doom that results from repressed Feelings, memories, desire and experiences bubbling to the surface of awareness. Anxiety is an emotional instability that stems from threat of unconscious material breaking through the wall of repression (Corey, 2008). It is triggered by something in the environment or within the individual

*Aggression*; this is expression of one's needs, feelings and opinions at the expense of other people's rights. Aggression comes as a result of feeling of powerlessness and feeling of threat due to lack of self-assertive skills. Aggressive people are loud, abusive, rude and sarcastic. It involves achieving desired goals by hurting and disregarding other people.

*Love*; this is a very strong feeling of deep affection to somebody, especially a member of a family or an intimate friend. Love is a positive emotions that can be expressed through facial expression and verbally. When somebody has intense love for somebody, he can express it spontaneously without any cognitive appraisals or attributes. Genuine love is non- possessive, it is ready to give, is honest and enjoyable (Schulz & Salthouse, 1999).

*Anger*; this is a strong negative emotion which involve violence towards other people. This can be expressed verbally and through physical abuse of other people. This occurs when one is being prevented from doing he wants to do. People who are annoyed can destroy anything on their way and can transfer this anger to innocent people (Hejmadi et al., 2000)

*Joy*; this is an emotional feeling of great happiness or delight that is triggered by success or satisfaction brought by somebody very special to you (Davis & Palladino, 2000). When a person

is joyful, the face is radiance and can be seen through the kind of behaviour that person is able to display at that moment like jumping or jubilant exclamation.

*Surprise*; this is a positive emotional feeling that is triggered by something that happened suddenly or unexpectedly (Plutchik, 1980). Somebody can be suppressed by the unexpected arrival of a good friend or by the sudden news that he has passed an interview for an employment or promotion. This makes the person to begin focusing on new ways, like looking for food for the unexpected visitor.

*Disgust*; this is a negative emotional strong feeling of dislike or disapproval for somebody or something that you feel is unacceptable or unpleasant (Hejmadi et al., 2000). If something is disgusting, one feels shocked and almost ill because it is so unpleasant.

*Fear*; this is a negative emotional feeling that one can have when he is in danger, when something bad might happen, or when a particular thing frightens him. If somebody is experiencing fear he is forced to seek protection or can freeze where he is so that he may not be noticed especially at night (Plutchik, 1980)

### **Functions of Emotions:**

People feel and express emotions for various ways and some of those ways are as follows;

*Emotions are sources of information*; once we express them, they alert us if we are still within the expected social and moral standards, give us a signal that something is happening in our environment (Alberry et al, 2007).

*They prepare us for action*; emotions trigger some arousal that can prepare us for an action like fight or flight when we encounter a harmful animal like a snake (Janis & Mann, 1977).

*They enhanced interpersonal communications*; emotions help individuals to initiate a communication of feelings with other people. They mobilize individuals to deal quickly with interpersonal encounters like facial expression is non verbal enhance communication between two people (Ekman, 1999).

*They act as regulators of social behaviours*; we intend to move away from situations and people who cause us pain, disgust and anguish and tend to seek the situations and people who make us happy (Bernatain & Nash, 2007).

*They create cognitive bias and maintain self esteem*; people who are in good mood are more confident, optimistic in life. They also view others as honest, creative and helpful (Forgas, 1995)

## Theories of Emotions

The following are some of the theories of emotions;

### James –Lange Somatic Theory of Emotions

This theory came from two independent studies of two psychologists, William James born in U.S.A. in 1884 and Carl Lange born in Denmark in 1885. This theory advocates that unique body changes accompany different emotions. Our perception will influence our emotional state. Physical responses that accompany emotional state come as result of our perception (Forgan, 1995). According to this theory, our brain has the ability of distinguishing between different types of emotional arousal and can generate feedback accordingly. When we experience a fearful stimulus, our brain will signal the body and the person can have high blood pressure, muscle tension and increases heartbeat.

According to James, any physiological experience is actually felt the moment it occurs

Stimulus (snake) —————▶ physiological (muscle tension) —————▶ Reaction (flight)

When we are subjected to any stimulus that arouse our emotions, our brain will send some signals which will cause some physiological changes like muscle and consequently we react either through flight or fight.

### Cannon–Board Theory;

William Cannon (1927/1987) was the first psychologist to challenge James – Lange theory. He advocates that emotional encounters were emergency situations that directly trigger a central cortex and sympathetic nervous system play a great role in any emotional situation. Cannon observed that those physiological changes like muscle tension and increased heartbeat are consequences of emotional arousal that originated from the brain. He further explained that emotional experiences and physiological change take place simultaneously, that means that emotional experiences are instantaneous. For instance when we encounter a stimulus like a snake, our body will be aroused and then the brain will send signal and we automatically react to that stimulus.

### Two – Factor Theory of Emotions;

This theory was put forward by two psychologists, Schachter and Singer (1962, 1964)

They believed that there is interplay between physiological and situational factors when determining some emotional reactions. They advocate that the intensity of emotion is determined by the quality of automatic physiological arousal. He pointed out that emotions are determined by the cognitive attribution that is attached to the experienced that initiate the arousal. Emotional experience depends on how an individual experience and interpret it. The underlying factor in this theory is cognitive attributes of the emotional arousing stimulus. For instance, if a person is being chased by a strange dog, the cognitive attribution is that wild dogs are dangerous but if the dog was his pet, then the cognitive attributes will be one of play and enjoyment (Bernstein & Nash, 2007). This theory was supported by Lazarus (1991) who emphasized that cognitive appraisal (values, goals, beliefs and expectations) play a great role in emotional arousals.

The way individuals interpret and appraised situations determine their emotional experiences. Learning play a great role in this cognitive appraisal and this explain why people usually get disappointed when other people do not meet their expectations.

According to Zajonc (1994) cognitive appraisal may only deal with long term emotional behaviour like depression and jealousy but not instantaneous creation like shouting a loud when you see a mouse.

### **Determinations of Emotions**

The way people experiences and expresses their emotions is determined by many factors and some of those factors include the following;

*Genetic Factors;* All infants possess some temperamental traits which they inherited from their parents which can later be shaped by environment. Temperament is a person's nature that affects the way he thinks, feels and behaves. Temperaments give us our unique way of reacting to situations (Kegan, 1984). The way an individual react to any stimuli depends on the nature of his temperament. Some can easily get annoyed when they are offended by other people but others may take the situation so easily in a more reasonable way.

*Environment Factors;* When an individual grows up in a good environment his emotional state will be relatively stable. Environment plays a great role in shaping individual's emotions. Temperament of an individual can be shaped by the kind of environment he lives in (Berk,

1989). This was proved by the study carried on two identical twins. One of the twin was left in natural environment but the other was taken to a different environment where he was subjected to harsh conditions (Aboud, 2002). The temperamental state began changing and the twin was so different, very harsh than the other twin. So environment determines how a person can express his emotions.

*Social Determinants;* We all live in a social environment and therefore we are social being. When a child is born into the family he/she comes to a social world where he learns different way of expressing emotions in a more socially and morally acceptance manner. In the society, the children try to imitate adult members of the society, such that if the parents usually display their unpleasant emotions in a wild manner like fighting when annoyed, then the children will copy the same. The parents and siblings are the most immediate members to socialize the infants. This interaction makes the child to learn the good and bad, the likes and dislikes, as well as emotions and attitudes (Allport, 1970). As the child move from the family to school and larger society, his/her begins to interact interestingly in the socially world. The child also gets models to imitate and can develop further likes and dislikes, positive or negative emotions, perceptions and stereotypes. These experiences in school help in shaping the emotions state of the child either positively or negatively (Peterson, 1992).

*Physical Factors;* Physical factors include things like physical state of the body and age. People who have physical disabilities tend to have free-floating hostility because they are still fighting with traumatic state of disability. They can project their unstable emotions on other people and can sometimes try to withdraw from other people. It has been established that short people are highly temperamental than tall people. Children has some effects on how they express their emotions. It has been found that most of them engage in fighting severally and within a short moment they are playing as if nothing was wrong some few minutes ago (Kagan, 1984). Old people have learned how to cope with their emotions and they know how and when to express them.

### **Effects of Emotions**

Emotions have several effects on the live of an individual, other people or even the environment. These effects can either be positive. The positive effects can be enhanced while the negative effects can be rectify be learning constructive way of expressing emotions. The following are some of the effects of emotions;

- Positive emotions can make a person to be self-assertive and confident in decision making.
- Positive emotions like love can enhance interpersonal relationships.
- Some negative emotions like disgust, surprise and fear can act as motivators to new initiatives. For instance when a person is disgusted by the type of food which was served, can go to the hotel to eat or can even go and cook it.
- Some emotions like acceptance and joy can improve a person's good health and prolong life.
- Negative emotions like anger can make a person to do destructive things like destroying property or even fighting and can even commit suicide.
- Some negative emotions like fear can cause health problems like ulcers, high blood pressure and even interfere with sexual arousals.
- Negative emotions like high anxiety can interfere with speech and can make a person to stammer or make incorrect statements.

### **Ways of Managing Negative Emotions**

- a) Learn to control yourself when you are angry. Do not speak and do not act until you are relaxed.
- b) Get away from anger provoking situations or people. Be positive about things and take things easily.
- c) Learn to appreciate other people and yourself.
- d) Learn self-assertive skills like remaining calm and being in controlled when you are annoyed.
- e) Never project your emotions on other people but learn to own mistakes and learn to say **"I AM SORRY"**.
- f) Engage yourself in dialogue and learn to listen to other people's opinion.



- g) Never hold grudges but deal with the problem there and there and forgive and forget.
- h) Interact and learn from other people on how to overcome negative emotions.

### **Conclusion**

Emotions are feelings that accompany thinking and they involve physiological arousal, expressive behaviour and conscious experiences. They are conscious experiences that affect the body which in turn leads to organic kinesthetic sensations and overt expressions. It also refers to the more intense effective that are accompanied by widespread changes in the body physiology. These emotions have various characteristics and they are also in different types. The emotions have different functions depending on the situations which an individual is at that moment. These emotions are influenced by so many factors ranging from genetic, environmental to social and physical factors. It is good for us to understand the effects of emotions in our life, so that we can know how to deal with other people and environment.

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